

REMARKS

I. General Comments

Applicant thanks the Examiner for acknowledging Applicant's claim to foreign priority and receipt of the certified copy of the priority document from the International Bureau.

Applicant also thanks the Examiner for considering the references listed on the PTO/SB/08 Form submitted with the Information Disclosure Statement of September 28, 2006. In addition,

Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating acceptance of the drawings filed on September 28, 2006.

II. Status of the Application

By the present Amendment, Applicant is amending claims 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, and 12. No new matter is added. In addition, Applicant is canceling claims 1, 4, 8, 11, 13, 15, and 18 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Claims 2, 3, 5-7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are all the claims currently pending in the application. Claims 1-3, 5, 7-9, 14, 16, and 20 have been rejected. Claims 4, 6, 10-13, 15, and 17-19 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. The present Amendment addresses each point of rejection raised by the Examiner. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

III. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating that claims 4, 6, 10-13, 15, and 17-19 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, Applicant is amending claim 2 to recite the features of claim 4. Also, Applicant is amending claim 3 to recite the features of claims 2, 3, and 11. In addition, Applicant is amending claim 5 to recite the features of claims 2, 5, and 13.

Further, Applicant is amending claim 6 to include the features of claims 2 and 6. Finally, Applicant is amending claim 9 to include the features of claims 2, 3, 9, and 18.

Therefore, Applicant submits that claims 2, 3, 5, 6, and 9 are immediately allowable over the cited prior art. Further, claims 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are allowable at least by virtue of their respective dependencies on claims 2, 3, 5, 6, and 9.

IV. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 1-3, 5, 8, and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,036,299 to Kobayashi et al. (hereinafter “Kobayashi”).

Claims 7, 14, 16, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Kobayashi in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,302,531 to Usui et al. (hereinafter “Usui”).

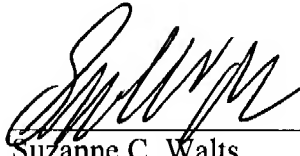
Applicant is canceling claims 1 and 8 without prejudice or disclaimer, rendering moot the rejection of these claims. Further, in light of the claim amendments discussed above, claims 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, and 20 are presently allowable over the cited prior art.

V. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,


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Date: February 6, 2008